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Stand and Be Counted

Utah's Latino Workers Demand Justice

By Tanya Radford and Craig Bernardini



Last April, we worked as census enumerators in the neighborhood around 9th West and North Temple, a neighborhood densely populated by immigrants, especially Spanish-speaking families. We weren't required to ask them what they were doing in Utah, nor did the brief interviews warrant the question. The census is not interested in accounting for people's presence in the U.S.; it is strictly interested in counting. Nevertheless, we were

somewhat surprised to find that immigrants in our neighborhood were not only cooperative, but also determined to be included in the census count. The census data have since revealed a veritable explosion of Hispanic immigration to Utah over the last 10 years. What has drawn Latinos to Utah isn't so different from what has drawn immigrants in general to this country: work. Immigrants work at some of the most physically taxing and dangerous jobs in this country. The United States has a long history of

importing laborers to do heavy and dangerous work—from the Asian and European immigrants who built America's transportation systems and worked in the mines, to the slaves who worked in the labor-intensive agricultural industry of the South. And without any real sense of irony, we are a country that claims proudly to have been built on the backs of immigrants. The great American mythology of the immigrant worker whose industry and strength lead him from the poorhouse to prosperity is a central part of the American identity. In America, anyone who works really hard can achieve the American Dream, an abstract concept of success that primarily corresponds to the end of exploitation—decent living wages, decent hours, and job security. These things in turn contribute to the family's ability to achieve financial and social stability—owning a house, laying by money, investing in the next generation's education. The exploitation of the first generation is repaid with the success of the following generations, or so the story goes. But despite the importance of the immigrant worker to American culture and identity, contemporary immigration is viewed by Americans through the lens of an increasingly rabid xenophobia.

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Police Kill 2 Protesters in Genoa

by Heather Hirschi

Hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world are protesting the corporatization of global politics and economics. In Sweden, tens of thousands gathered in Gothenburg to voice their opposition to the European Union (EU) during George W. Bush's visit. Three people were wounded in Gothenburg when police fired live ammunition into the crowd, the first time police have used bullets against protesters in Sweden since 1931. As I write this, reports are flooding the Indymedia newswire of two deaths in



IMC Argentina

Genoa, Italy, where 70,000 to 100,000 people jam the streets to protest the G8 summit. It is becoming more and more apparent that the European authorities are committed to any means necessary to protect the leaders of the globalized race-to-the-bottom economic policy of the G8. On July 20th, a 20-year-old Spanish protester was shot in the head and killed by police gunfire in Genoa. The protester was hit by two gunshots in the forehead and cheek, then run over by a paramilitary

police van. Multiple reports announce this as one of two deaths in Genoa. Reports are also coming in from IMC-Italy that 72 people have been wounded. These are the first deaths in the ongoing battle against global capitalism and corporatization that has been waging internationally for the past two years. The G8 summit has already been characterized by security forces' use of violent tactics including tear gas, water cannons, and now, live ammunition. In preparation for the G8 summit, where leaders of the eight richest nations are gathered to discuss world policies, Italy placed surface-to-air missiles at the city's airport to guard against possible air attacks. Authorities also erected 20-foot barricades around the "red zone" (an area that takes up most of the city) in order, according to Reuters, "to stop demonstrators from getting near the leaders." Conflicting reports make it unclear whether or not the G-8 summit will shut down. What emerges from this latest example of extreme force is the insistence of the mainstream media on characterizing protestors as "terrorists." This ongoing demonization of hundreds of thousands who want sane, equitable economic practices that protect human rights and ecosystems, illustrates the need for persistent and unrelenting independent coverage.

for a report on the Gothenburg EU protests, see page 3

Nuclear-Friendly Nuclear Waste Opposition?

by Jon Jensen

At a May 25th press conference, Governor Mike Leavitt was asked if the state's opposition to Private Fuel Storage (PFS) and its plans to store 40,000 metric tons of nuclear waste on the Skull Valley Goshute Reservation was also a sign of de facto state policy against nuclear power. Leavitt quickly responded "no," and assured those gathered that the state was not against nuclear power. How could it possibly be? After all, Leavitt is a close ally of George W. Bush, whose grand energy policy had just been released, calling for 1,300 new power plants, including nuclear power plants. The State of Utah opposing part of a Bush policy? Sacrilege.

This same position has been taken by Utah Senators Orrin Hatch and Robert Bennett. Both have advocated against the PFS proposal. Nevertheless, both senators support the nuclear power industry, and both support the siting of a permanent nuclear waste dump in Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Similarly, the Deseret News, which editorialized against the PFS proposal in its February 18th "Learning from a toxic legacy", has also editorialized in favor of the nuclear power industry and the Bush administration's call for massive expansion of this industry ("Build more nuclear plants," May 4th). The Salt Lake Tribune has likewise given its tacit nod to building new nuclear power plants ("California's Shock Therapy, May 27th), despite previous editorials against PFS.

How can building new nuclear reactors, and thus generating new waste, even be entertained when there is no solution for the waste that has been generated thus far? The efforts of the nuclear industry to dump its waste off-site have been fiercely opposed in all the places targeted to receive that waste, including Nevada, New Mexico, and here in Utah. Clearly, this opposition suggests that the debate should not be about whether to build new nuclear power plants, but whether to shut down the existing ones. It is illogical to both support the

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SUBMISSIONS

The Gadfly seeks submissions in the form of local and global news, cultural criticism, human interest, opinion pieces, poetry, cartoons, photos and art. Articles should not exceed 2,000 words. Letters should be under 300 words (unsigned letters will not be accepted).

All submissions must be accompanied by a full name and contact information including phone or email.

Submit double-spaced articles on disc or via email to:
Utah Independent Media Center
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The print group reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process. We will regularly draw articles from the web site; we encourage self-publication of articles, audio and video. Instructions are available on the web page:

Submission deadline for our September issue:
August 15, 2001

This city is just like some enormous thoroughbred horse, rather sluggish....The horse needs a gadfly to keep it awake; and I have been divinely appointed to sit on your back and keep you awake by my advice and criticism. So the whole day long, I continually flit about, settling here, there, and everywhere. But perhaps you are in a bad mood, as people often are when they have been dozing off and something has woken them; perhaps you will reach for your fly-swatters, and when I am dead, you will go back to sleep for the rest of your lives....
from Plato's *Trial and Death of Socrates*

The Indymedia Revolution Comes to Utah

by Jonathan Jemming and Todd Roberts

Many may recall the media images of masked people smashing windows in Seattle back in November 1999. Ever wonder what that “riot” was really all about? The network news’ distortion of the events surrounding the World Trade Organization protests detracted from the messages of the 40,000 peaceful demonstrators opposing the WTO’s global agenda. Fortunately, the knowledge existed beforehand that a media directly or indirectly owned by the same corporations responsible for promoting the WTO is a media that cannot be fully trusted. Thus, before the Seattle protests, one of the greatest experiments in internet democracy was pioneered: the Independent Media Center (IMC), a web-site that lets the public become the media. The IMC enabled a more accurate story of the Seattle WTO protests to be told by the voices of those who directly experienced it.

In the beginning the Independent Media Center was loosely defined as a network of collectively run media outlets for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of the truth. The group proclaimed simply to work out of a love and inspiration for people who continue to work for a better world, despite corporate media’s distortions and unwillingness to cover the efforts to free humanity. Oh, how things have grown!

Since 1999, the IMC, espousing this general principle and operating according to a consensual decision-making model, has expanded dramatically. With autonomous chapters in over 40 cities throughout the world, the two-year-old collective has grown into an international network of volunteer media activists. In Utah, the Independent Media Center began to organize in October of 2000 and was on-line and meeting regularly by January, 2001, just in time to provide an outlet for the voices surrounding the Inaugural protests in Salt Lake City. In April, 2001, Utah Indymedia volunteers converged with the global collective in San Francisco to discuss the future of the IMC. One outcome of the very rigorous meeting was the tentative formulation of expanded IMC “Principles of Unity”. The Principles of Unity represent the dynamic values to which the collective generally adheres. (Note: principle #3 is still under discussion.)

Principles of Unity

1. The Independent Media Center Network (IMCN) is based upon principles of equality, decentralization and local autonomy. The IMCN is not derived from a centralized bureaucratic process, but from the self-organization of autonomous collectives that recognize the importance in developing a union of networks.
2. All IMCs consider open exchange of and open access to information a prerequisite to the building of a more free and just society.
3. All IMCs respect the right of activists who choose not to be photographed or filmed.
4. All IMCs, based upon the trust of their contributors and readers, shall utilize open web based publishing, allowing individuals, groups and organizations to express their views, anonymously if desired.
5. The IMC Network and all local IMC collectives shall be not-for-profit.
6. All IMCs recognize the importance of process to social change and are committed to the development of non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian relationships, from interpersonal relationships to group dynamics. Therefore, they shall organize themselves collectively and be committed to the principle of consensus decision making and the development of a [direct, participatory democratic process] that is transparent to its membership.
7. All IMCs recognize that a prerequisite for participation in the decision making process of each local group is the contribution of an individual’s labor to the group.
8. All IMCs are committed to caring for one another and our respective communities both collectively and as individuals and will promote the sharing of resources including knowledge, skills and equipment.
9. All IMCs shall be committed to the use of free source code, whenever possible, in order to develop the digital infrastructure, and to increase the independence of the network by not relying on proprietary software.
10. All IMCs shall be committed to the principle of human equality, and shall not discriminate, including discrimination based upon race, gender, age, class or sexual orientation. Recognizing the vast cultural traditions within the network, we are committed to building [diversity] within our localities.

As the principles reveal, the IMC is constructing itself as a community-based organization using media production and distribution to support and facilitate communities’ political and cultural self-representation. It seeks to illuminate and analyze local and global issues impacting individuals, communities and ecosystems by directly providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate their issues to the world.

Here in Utah, a fully-operational IMC is crucial to the development of grassroots knowledge of the local and global community. The evolution of the internet-based Utah-IMC into print is cause for celebration. With this foundation built, it is time to look ahead. The Utah-IMC is in constant and dire need of volunteers, donations of physical space and supplies, media contributors, etc.

With twelve hundred hits a day on _____, a very successful debut fundraiser and a core group of active volunteers, it is undeniable that indymedia lives in Utah. Please join this revolution and take it further.

Don’t hate the media--be the media!

Join the Indymedia Revolution!

Make a donation! The Gadfly functions voluntarily—we don’t run advertisements and we don’t charge. We need your support to keep agitating. Detach and return this form with your donation. If you request, we’ll add you to our mailing and email lists to keep you informed of upcoming Indymedia events.

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Protesters Shot in Sweden

Compiled from reports at IMC Sweden

Gothenburg, Sweden—The Swedish national and local government had promised to rely more on dialogue than sheer force during the Anti-European Union (EU) protests that were planned for U.S. President George Bush’s visit to this city. However, the promise was blatantly broken when police laid siege to a school on Thursday, 14 June, where demonstrators were legally living.

The police used dogs to attack the occupants, who responded by throwing stones and building barricades. Police violence escalated as the protest continued into Friday.

On Friday morning, while the arrested demonstrators were gradually being interrogated and released, there was a pre-planned break-in action getting underway at the Conference Center.

Angry that the police were blocking a legal march, the demonstrators began to chant against the police and peacefully tried to inch their way forward.

Later Friday evening, *Reclaim The City* started their street party. The police closed in with riot gear and dogs. After a period of fighting between police and the Reclaimers, a group of 50 police in riot gear entered the area. The police said they were going to “clean up” the area. Even the media were sent away.

Stone-throwing is cited as the provocation for police opening fire with live ammunition. Three activists were shot and one policeman was badly injured from being struck in the head with a stone. One of the activists was shot through the stomach - his condition, though still critical, has stabilized.

Everyone here in Sweden is shocked by these incidents, since police have not used live ammunition against protesters since 1931. For updates, visit:



Over 100,000 demonstrate against G8 Summit in Genoa, Italy. Violence erupts in Genoa where police close in on protesters trying to help slain Spanish youth

Check it out!

stories from the indymedia network

Nuclear-friendly Nuclear Waste

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growth of the nuclear industry and at the same time oppose its concerted and sustained efforts to dump its waste on great basin states.

Unless, of course, opposition to PFS’ current proposal is tempered with strong support for a permanent repository somewhere outside of Utah, as the Deseret News editorial advocated. This is the tack Utah’s Senators have taken by opposing PFS’ current plan while advancing a permanent repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. In this way, they are able to appear pro-Utah without also appearing anti-nuclear.

Simply preventing nuclear waste from being dumped in Utah solves nothing if the waste itself continues to be produced. To be anti-nuclear-waste-in-Utah, rather than simply anti-nuclear-waste, is to be pro-nuclear-waste-somewhere-else. This position skirts the root issue: the creation of waste. If it is not okay to dump the nation’s nuclear waste in Utah, then it is not okay to dump it anywhere else.

Utah’s new lead counsel in the PFS case, Monte N. Stewart, grew up in Nevada, and referred at the press conference to the Nevada leadership’s strong support for Utah’s fight against PFS. The support of Utah’s politicians for dumping the waste in Nevada negates the possibility of reciprocating Nevada’s gesture. The Western states have yet to band together in a united stand against the nuclear industry, and will continue to be pitted against one another so long as Western politicians support the industry.

Governor Leavitt was also asked at the press conference whether he planned to take a stand against the other nuclear waste proposal facing Utah by voting against Envirocare’s application to take decommissioned nuclear reactors. He responded only by saying that the state will not do anything to “jeopardize” its fight against PFS. Opponents of nuclear waste storage have long maintained that approving Envirocare’s proposal will do precisely that, creating a precedent-setting double standard that the state would have a difficult time defending, both legally and politically.

The refusal of Leavitt and most of Utah’s other politicians to take a stand against Envirocare and against the nuclear industry sends the message that they are only against the dumping of *some* nuclear waste *in parts of Utah*. They are not against the creation of nuclear waste. Nor are they against dumping waste outside of Utah. They don’t even mind dumping within Utah, so long as it is on the private lands of companies, like Envirocare, that have contributed thousands of dollars to legislative and gubernatorial campaigns.

It’s time for the U.S. to sunset the nuclear power industry, as Germany is doing. That’s the necessary first step in addressing the nuclear waste problem. As Texas populist Jim Hightower says, “When you find that you’ve dug yourself into a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging.”

Keep On Diggin’: Nuclear Power v. Energy Efficiency

“But nuclear power is critical to supplying our nation’s energy needs!” cry the nuclear cheerleaders. But what are our “needs?” With about 4.6 percent of the world’s population, the United States consumes a whopping 25.3% of the total energy in the world. According to the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), only 10 percent of the energy that goes into the typical centralized power plant ends up as useful work. In other words, Americans use a profligate amount of electricity in an embarrassingly wasteful way. As RMI has reported many times, 75 percent of the electricity used in the U.S. today could be saved with energy efficiency measures, and those measures cost less than the electricity itself.

So again the question: do we “need” as much electricity as we use? Or could we make vast improvements in efficiency, conservation, and modesty, getting the same or better services with less electricity consumption? Take one example: according to Bill Prindle of the Alliance to Save Energy, if the Bush administration were to uphold the 30 percent improvement standard for air conditioners issued in January, we wouldn’t “need” 138 of the

proposed 1,300 new 300 Megawatt power plants. But guess what? The Bush administration moved to roll back this standard.

As for the electricity that is generated, we could drastically increase the proportion that comes from renewable, decentralized sources such as solar and wind. But the Bush administration slashed the nation’s renewable energy budget by nearly half.

The nuclear industry in the U.S. – not to mention much of the fossil fuel-based electricity industry - could be entirely replaced by energy efficiency and renewable energy without destroying civilization as we know it, despite the claims of the doomsayers defending nuclear power. Instead, we have an energy policy calling for expansion of the industry. Could it be that energy efficiency and renewable energy are so democratic, and offer so few potential profits to conventional energy companies, that they are simply intolerable to those same companies that underwrote the Bush campaign?

The Bush Administration’s
“National Energy Policy Report”

F O I O W t h e

The National Energy Policy Report, which was released by Dick Cheney this spring, calls for opening vast amounts of federal lands to oil and gas drilling, constructing 1,300 new power plants, and expanding the nuclear power industry. George W. Bush, who organized the task force that produced the report, received more money from the energy industry during the 2000 campaign than any other candidate in the last five elections combined. He received \$1.8 million from the oil and gas industry, \$447,089 from electric utilities, \$290,209 from the nuclear power industry, and \$110,021 from the coal mining industry (information from the Center for Responsive Politics, www.opensecrets.org.)

Federal energy efficiency standards have been strongly opposed by the same industries that contributed to the Bush campaign. For example, oil and gas companies have long opposed increasing fuel efficiency standards in automobiles, arguing that such standards will hurt the economy. Certainly they have the potential to hurt the economy – the economy of the oil and gas companies, that is. After all, the money people would save from fuel-efficient cars would otherwise flow straight into the coffers of Exxon-Mobil-Chevron-Exxon-Shell-Arco-Elf. These companies’ efforts have been instrumental in keeping today’s fuel efficiency standards very low.

The same industry has been lobbying to open public lands, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, to massive new fossil fuel exploration. The Natural Resources Defense Council reports that raising the fuel efficiency of new passenger vehicles to an average of 39 miles per gallon, which has been technologically feasible for years, would save more than 15 times as much oil as is economically recoverable from the Arctic Refuge.

However, the National Energy Policy Report does not call for raising fuel efficiency standards to 39 miles per gallon. Doing so could diminish the profits of the corporations that contributed \$1.8 million to the Bush campaign. Evidently \$1.8 million is a small price to pay for an energy policy made to order. -J. J.

The Race to Incarcerate: 2,000,000 and Growing

By Giles Larsen and Andy Jones

As the United States prison population climbs above two million, the world’s largest proportion of incarcerated individuals relative to the general population, the “tough on crime” philosophy which has had a marked impact on this trend has been increasingly challenged by critics. Questions of institutional racism, private profiteering, and the efficacy of the current punishment-oriented model of justice have been amplified by the staggering increase of people behind bars and the massive reallocation of public funds to house them.

During the period between 1930 and 1970, the number of prisoners relative to the general population remained steady, but the 1980s ushered in a dramatic increase which continues today, although it has slowed somewhat in recent years. The number of prisoners sentenced for more than one year, representing 96% of the inmate population, per 100,000 US residents grew from 139 in 1980 to 476 in 1999.

ties of each case – cannot be considered.

Such statutes have serious financial impacts on the limited resources of government budgets. But when it comes to building and operating prisons, “money is no object,” Watson insists. The costs of incarceration – which include operational funds, investments in the construction of new facilities, and maintenance of old ones – are the fastest-growing area of state and federal government spending. From 1987 to 1995, state government expenditures on prisons increased by 30%, while spending on higher education dropped by 18%. On the federal level, the Bureau of Prisons budget requested \$3.8 billion in 2000, an increase of 1700% from 1986.

The effectiveness of the tax dollars allocated for incarceration has been questioned by critics, some of whom are themselves former inmates. Fleet Mall, who spent 14 years in federal prison on small-time drug charges, argues that the widespread demonization of prisoners reflected in “tough on

[but] the vast majority of [people] in prison in this country are in for nonviolent charges, charges that are related to drugs.”

Davis sees this distorted public perception reflected in the questionable rationale behind the illegality of street drugs on one hand, and the mainstream acceptance of prescription drugs on the other. “I find it absolutely ironic that you can turn on the television and see an add that says, ‘If you have social anxiety, ask your doctor about praxo’,” says Davis. Meanwhile, “there are poor people who don’t have a doctor they can ask about praxo,” but who have a whole range of street drugs available to them. “They’re trying to feel better and they end up getting punished as a result.”

Issues of class, race, and gender all interrelate to compound the handicap for how individuals are dealt with by the criminal justice system. For Watson, poor children of color are “kids born with one foot in the jail.” Watson describes the case of Mathew



Illustration by Giles Larsen

This sharp increase in incarceration rates is due in part to rising overall crime rates during the ‘70s and ‘80s. But a steady decline during much of the ‘90s has not been matched by a similar reduction in the inmate population. Critics attribute this ongoing expansion largely to the punitive emphasis of the criminal justice system resulting from the “war on drugs” and the hardening of public opinion toward criminal offenders.

“Build it, and they will come,” asserts Clark Watson, a former political science professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and longtime criminal justice volunteer. “There is a symbiotic relationship between the legislature which makes the laws which fill the prisons [and prison expansion].” A variety of legislative approaches, such as double-sentencing for felony convictions, eliminating discretionary parole, and mandating 25 years to life for 3-time felons (“Three strikes, you’re out”), have contributed substantially to the burgeoning population of people behind bars, Watson says.

Mandatory minimum sentencing has also had a marked effect, particularly within the federal system. First enacted by Congress in 1986, mandatory minimums require that judges sentence drug offenders to harsh prison terms for a predetermined amount of time without the possibility of parole. According to the mandatory minimum formula, sentences are determined solely by the weight of the drugs. Mitigating factors such as the severity of the crime, the offender’s role in the offense, and his or her past criminal record – factors commonly used by judges to tailor the punishment to the particular-

crime” statutes constantly reinforces the perception of prisoners, even amongst themselves, of being less than human. Mall explains that prison system creates a “pervasive environment of anger and bitterness” which “buries individuals under a mountain of guilt.” Mall insists that under these circumstances, guilt is a debilitating emotion that does not permit individuals who have committed a crime to access genuine regret.

Angela Davis, who recently spoke at the University of Utah, agrees. Davis is a professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz whose “life’s work” has been taking on prison issues. Rather than provide an opportunity for self-improvement, “Prisons are breeding grounds for homophobia... racism, and sexism,” she contends.

High recidivism rates indicate that the disempowering nature of incarceration may actually contribute to prison expansion. Nearly all incarcerated individuals – 95% – will be released eventually, the majority of whom will be rearrested for a felony or serious misdemeanor within 3 years of their release. “There is something fundamentally flawed about the assumption that you can lock people up and then expect them to become rehabilitated,” says Davis.

This fact may be moot to the policy makers and their constituencies who are quick to demonize criminals, but Davis argues that prisoners are no different from the rest of us. “Many people in prison are there because they just made a mistake,” says Davis. “We tend to think about the imprisoned population as a population of murderers and rapists,

Adam Romero of Colorado, a 16-year-old African American who recently received a jail sentence for truancy charges. Romero couldn’t even remember the name of his court-appointed lawyer because he had almost no interaction with her. On two occasions, his lawyer missed court hearings, sending a substitute instead. When Romero’s school administrators wished to speak against his incarceration, his legal counsel failed to call them forth to testify on his behalf. “Because there was no competent defense, the judge dropped the axe,” Watson explains, adding that this type of situation is commonplace.

Race demographics within prisons are nearly the mirror image of the demographics of the general public. While 67% of state and federal inmates are minorities, minorities account for only 28% of the general population. The US Department of Justice reports that at current levels of incarceration, black males have more than a 1 in 4 chance of going to prison during their lifetimes, while white males have a 1 in 23 chance of serving time.

Supporters of the prison system refute these statistics and analogies with the assertion that minority populations are simply committing more crimes, or more serious crimes. However, several studies reveal discrimination in sentencing practices even for similar types of crimes. A report by the Youth Law Center argues that minority youth who commit crimes are more likely than white youth who commit comparable crimes to be referred to juvenile court, detained, charged as adults, and serve time in adult facilities. Other studies by the U.S. Department of Justice show that among persons convicted of

drug felonies in state courts, African Americans were more likely to be sent to prison than whites, with 46% of convicted African-American defendants receiving prison sentences, compared to 32% of convicted white defendants.

This discrepancy worries many critics who are concerned that those already disadvantaged by the system are additionally vulnerable to economic exploitation when incarcerated. In turn, the potential for economic exploitation furthers the corruption of justice by providing a financial incentive for expanding the number of people in prison. “Somebody is making a lot of money as a result of this huge imprisoned population: corporations,” cautions Davis. “Corporations provide the goods and services. They develop the prison design plans. They construct the prisons... [They] produce almost anything you can imagine that is connected with this prison-industrial complex.”

In addition, many well-known corporations such as Revlon, Microsoft, Boeing, and Nordstrom use prison labor directly or indirectly. Largely ignorant of this practice, the public had a rude awakening recently when an inmate was caught having a correspondence with a teen-age girl who had been originally contacted while he was working as a telemarketer selling vacation get-aways. Still, prison officials defend work programs in general. “Inmates that are idle are more restless and violent natured,” while jobs keep them busy and easier to manage, says Jack Ford, Utah Department of Corrections Spokesperson.

Most people agree that work programs should exist, and support the work ethic which inmates acquire as a result. However, while the work opportunities connected to the private sector are considered “premier” jobs because they pay significantly higher than standard prison work such as license plate manufacturing, they are generally occupations which are considered undesirable in the public job market, such as roofing, waste management, and asbestos removal.

Critics also point out that the private sector jobs rarely pay substantially higher than the federal minimum wage, which they are required to pay to inmates, and up to 80% of an inmate’s wages can be deducted for victim restitution and state reimbursement for costs of work supervision and general incarceration. This creates a “catch 22,” with inmates who participate in the work programs getting very little for their labor, while those who do nothing may be eligible for “indigent” status that provides them a small stipend for a minimal prison life. The end result is that inmates gain little measurable benefit, while their private sector employers profit from cheap, unorganized labor.

Many states are also experimenting with the private prison industry in order to alleviate the costs of imprisonment and manage the chronic overcrowding of government prisons. Private prisons are corporations owned and operated for profit, which use investor money to build the prisons and then charge the government a per-capita, per-day fee for housing prisoners. However, government studies by the General Accounting Office and the U.S. Attorney General report that there is too little reliable data to conclude that private prisons actually save taxpayers money. Critics go further, stating that costs are inevitably cut in order to turn a profit, including underpaying and undertraining employees, which may have undue consequences on the safety of prisoners and the public.

“Prison expansion affects us,” Davis warns. “It’s not just about those who are unfortunate enough to be caught in this web of profitable punishment We cannot consider the future of democracy without recognizing the threat that is posed by the prison-industrial complex.” Not only are corporations benefiting from a prison population which is predominantly of color, but felons in 12 states lose their right to vote permanently. At any given time in the U.S., 1 in 7 black men cannot vote, and in Alabama, the number is as high as 1 in 3. During the last presidential election, 400,000 black men in Florida were disenfranchised for having been incarcerated, a number that clearly impacted that state’s contested results.

The predominance of minority inmates behind bars and the resulting withdrawal of their democratic rights, combined with the profiteering of the private sector on both prison labor and the warehousing of inmates in private prisons, gives prisons the appearance of a modern form of slavery. “[Prison expansion] is driven by race and is an inherently evil and deliberate system every bit as evil as the slavery imposed on southern states,” claims Watson.

In fact, slavery was never abolished in this country, only hidden away behind bars. The 13th amendment reads, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except for the punishment of a crime... shall exist in the United States.” Historically, Southern States manipulated this loophole by establishing the convict leasing system to help rebuild their economies after defeat in the Civil War. Under racialized criminal codes and discriminatory law enforcement, hundreds of thousands of mostly indigent black men were sentenced to years of hard labor for minor infractions such as vagrancy, vulgar language, or train-hopping. States and County governments then leased convicts out to businesses, ostensibly in order to recoup the costs of their arrests and convictions, while those who had enough money to pay the fees themselves could buy their way to freedom. For those less fortunate, businesses built their prison accommodations, fed and clothed the convicts, and worked them in the cotton fields, lumber yards and coal mines. Due to the squalid living and working conditions, and the physical brutality which convicts were regularly subject to, this was a death sentence for thousands. The race to incarcerate in modern times has continued this tradition of criminalizing race and class in a subtler manner.

In spite of this, many critics of the prison system remain optimistic. Davis, a self-declared death penalty and prison abolitionist, suggests that the root causes leading to incarceration need to be addressed. These include the de-industrialization of the economy and the resulting job loss, as well as the shift of resources away from education to incarceration, she says.

“We take prisons for granted: we assume they have always been here... and are the only way you can address issues of crime,” Davis says. However, “The prison was a historical invention,” she offers, referring to the Quaker origins of the penitentiary in the 18th century as an alternative form of punishment. “And if it was invented historically, we can also think about other forms of punishment – other ways of addressing these issues.”

In place of the “one size fits all” approach of the prison system, Davis envisions a network of social structures to deal with different crimes, such as treatment centers for drug-related offenses. Others have suggested models of punishment which empower those who have committed crimes through meaningful work, such as service to the community. One such model, called restorative justice, has gained some mainstream acceptance recently. According to this model, communities are allowed a certain degree of control over minor crimes in order to facilitate healing between the offender and victim.

Davis and other prison activists want us to consider history within the context of our present moment: the way we deal with criminal justice issues today will speak to those looking back about the way we collectively valued our humanity. “There will come a time,” says Davis, “when your grandchildren will ask, ‘Back then there were 2 million people in prison. How could you just allow that to happen?’”

Author’s note: In Utah the situation is relatively good: mandatory minimums are no longer on the books for most crimes; the private prison industry is largely absent (although the recent effort to build one in Grantsville will not be the last); the prison population has somewhat flat-lined below 6,000 (in 1999, Utah was 42nd in the nation for states with the highest ratio of prisoners per 100,000 residents; Utah was at 245, Louisiana being the highest at 776 and Minnesota the lowest at 125); drug courts and restorative justice are being tested; and enlightened prison officials have recently started diverting parole violators from ending up back in prison.

Despite “the great things going for us,” Mari Anne

Johnstone, a member of Prisoner Information Network (PIN), says “we still have room for improvement.” Utah has experienced an 8.8% growth in its inmate population from 1990 to 1999, the seventh highest growth rate in the nation. The local recidivism rate is 67%. Additionally, minorities are over-represented in Utah prisons at an even higher rate than in the rest of the nation. Although minorities account for 11% of the general population in Utah, they account for 33% of the prison population. Johnstone also alludes to the fact that as long as institutions of walls exists, abuses will occur behind them, noting the treatment of inmates by guards as an ongoing concern.

For more information about PIN, email Mari Anne: pin-btw@juno.com. The local chapter of Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM) can be contacted at 801-272-4333. A good resource for prison issues in general is the Prison Activist Research Center at <http://www.prisonactivist.org> or CorpWatch’s feature “The Prison Industry; Capitalist Punishment” at <http://www.corpwatch.org/feature/prisons/index.html>

The Dream of Freedom

By Cory Stringfellow

Cory Stringfellow, son of Utah Families Against Mandatory Minimums founder Burt Stringfellow, had served six years out of a sixteen-year sentence for “conspiring to distribute LSD” when his sentence was commuted by then-President Clinton. The long sentence for a nonviolent drug offense illustrates what FAMM calls “sentences run amok” and American society’s “irrational rage to punish.” At the July 14th Bastille Day rally at the Utah State Capital, Cory made the following statement:

Latino Workers Demand Justice

continued from page 1

The paradox is usually managed by making a temporal distinction: our forebears were good immigrants who came to work, while the current wave are bad immigrants who come to steal jobs and live on welfare. Too bad there aren't any first generation immigrants around to remind us that the same was said of them, and worse.

Currently, our country has two absolutely contradictory policies on immigration. On the one hand, we want to close our borders and end immigration. To this end, we have seen an increasing militarization of the border with Mexico, stiffening penalties for illegal immigration, and political maneuvers like California's Proposition 187, which would have denied medical care and schooling to the children of immigrants. On the other hand, industry needs workers that they can exploit with impunity. Businesses are hiring record numbers of illegal workers for which the penalties are seldom enforced, and, most recently, the Bush administration has expressed a desire to reinstate the bracero program.

Thus, at the same time business depends on cheap labor to boost profits, the right wing stokes the fire of anti-immigrant sentiment, helping to keep the immigrant

Institute of Occupational Safety and Health recommends the use of a respirator when spraying the compounds used by these workers, OSHA (the regulative agency) only requires companies to provide dust masks. Moreover, the safety data sheets required for all industrial compounds used on jobs are prepared by the manufacturers of those industrial compounds and provide little in the way of clear information about the health effects of prolonged contact. It may well be the case that current regulations are inadequate protection (the NIOSH recommendations suggest exactly this), but the adequacy of existing regulations is generally only disputed in hindsight, as a recent Frontline special on the chemical industry demonstrates.

For the USC workers, however, even the protections required by OSHA may have been withheld. Workers have charged that at times they were unable to obtain the most basic safety equipment. Because USC had reportedly failed to pay its bill, the company that provides the worker's basic safety gear—safety glasses, gloves, and dust masks—refused to supply the equipment.

As regards the charge of unpaid overtime hours, the burden of proof falls on the workers who must produce paystubs that show overtime worked without overtime

made an offer, and at the present time it appears that any negotiations will be done in court. But while the company has refused to reinstate workers or to negotiate, it did send checks for back payment of overtime for the last year to the Department of Labor. This effective admission of non-payment came with its own problems: several of the checks were returned for insufficient funds, a situation which the company maintains was bank error.

Moreover, the discovery that federal funds are invested in the project – despite the city's insistence that no federal monies were involved – may also trigger an investigation of pay rate violations and civil rights violations. When federal money is involved in a project, contractors must pay their laborers the prevailing wage – more than triple the minimum-wage earned by many at Utah Structural Coatings. The investigation would necessarily include not only USC, but also Boyer and Layton, the general contractors on the Gateway development project. USC may also be investigated by the IRS for non-payment of workers' income taxes and social security.

Whether these investigations lead to a favorable outcome for the workers or not, they will likely do little to address the bigger problem of exploitation that is endemic to the construction and service industries. Because many immigrant workers have no legal right to work in this country, it is easy for companies to sidestep the regulations that insure worker safety and wages. And companies all over Utah, and all over the United States, are doing precisely this.

The only way to end the exploitation of immigrant workers in the US is to grant them the rights associated with being workers in this country. One way to achieve this is through a general amnesty for all immigrants currently working the United States. When workers can negotiate with their employers without fear of being deported or being fired without recourse, then they will stop tolerating exploitation. The second way of addressing this problem is to pay all workers a living wage—whether by raising the federal minimum wage or by instituting living wage ordinances. Not surprisingly, the Utah legislature, always a patsy for business, struck early against a possible living wage campaign in Utah by passing Senate Bill 138—the minimum wage applicability bill, which prohibits cities and counties from setting a minimum wage above the federal minimum when contracting with private companies. Interestingly, when we brought the issue to the attention of the mayor's office, we were told that, so long as the company paid the federal minimum, and no federal money was invested in the project, the city's hands were tied. What was needed, we were told, were ordinances that would require that contractors with the city pay a living wage. Whether the discovery that federal monies are invested in the project frees the city's hands is not yet clear. Perhaps the city and Mayor Anderson should be encouraged to fight SB138 and institute a living wage for city contractors. Failing this, city contracts should spell out the responsibilities of general contractors for the labor and civil rights violations of their subcontractors.

These systemic changes are unlikely to happen anytime soon. But in a sense, the workers at Utah Structural Coatings have already won something important for themselves and the Latino community of Utah: the recognition that they have the will and capacity to enter into the struggle and demand that justice be done.

As this paper goes to print, the strike is winding down. The National Labor Relations Board ruling—that workers should be reinstated with back pay and that there is enough evidence to proceed with charges of discrimination—has given the win to the strikers, but has not resolved the problems. Without a company offer, and with a court battle sure to drag on for months if not years, the most important thing at this juncture is to put the strikers back to work. To this end, the Carpenters have spent the last several weeks training the strikers in a variety of building trade skills. Armed with their new union-issue tool belts, workers will gain the qualifications that will help them to find better-paying jobs.

On July 14th, the striking USC workers played their replacements in soccer (“strikers versus scabs,” as one organizer called it).

The final score: Strikers-4, Replacements-1.

When workers can negotiate with their employers without fear of being deported or being fired without recourse, then they will stop tolerating exploitation.

population marginalized – to keep the cheap labor cheap. Without legal status in the country, immigrant workers are unable to demand better working conditions or better pay.

But the invisibility and hence exploitability of immigrant labor may soon become a thing of the past. Increasingly around the country, immigrant workers have begun to step forward and seek union representation. And unions, under fire in this state and nationwide, have begun to recognize that the future of American labor once again lies with the immigrant community.

It is in this context that the extraordinary importance of the strike at the Gateway project becomes clear. On the last day of April, 57 of 60 employees of Utah Structural Coatings walked off the job after the company refused to recognize their union, the Mountain West Regional Council of Carpenters. Over the two months since the strike began, the numbers have dwindled somewhat: workers have returned to work with the promise of double or triple their original wages. The remaining 34 workers are doing what no Latino workers have yet done in Utah, and their struggle is being closely watched by both the business and labor communities.

And they aren't the only ones watching this strike. The Latino community has closely watched the strike as well. In success, the USC workers are poised to open the door for other immigrant laborers in Utah and elsewhere who are as yet too afraid to step forward.

The workers' grievances against the company have been reported in the local press. They claim safety violations, unpaid overtime hours, a substantial pay cut, and fraudulent insurance deductions, as well as discrimination on the job site. Their grievances are good examples of the ways in which laborers, especially undocumented ones, are exploited in this country.

Initially, the workers took individual complaints to their foremen and the general manager and were rebuffed. One striker reports that in response to his complaint about improper insurance deductions, he was told that he made too much money and could expect a pay cut. The workers then started to approach the foremen with collective complaints. Several strikers report that they were seduced back into compliance by the promise of company help with legalizing everyone's work status. Then, on the day of the walk-out, management allegedly threatened to report workers to the INS. These are tactics regularly used by companies to quell rebellion in their workforce.

While these are fairly cut-and-dry examples of worker exploitation, the difficulties associated with making a legal case points to the industry bias built into worker safety and wage laws. The workers' safety complaints are case in point. Workers at USC spray a fire-retardant coating onto the girders of buildings. While the National

paid. Some of the strikers have been employed by the company for over five years, and many have not retained records of their wages.

But the many legal snares and the worries associated with their undocumented status aren't the only things these workers are up against. From the beginning the struggle has been fraught with behind-the-scenes squabbles over union jurisdiction and tactics. Utah has traditionally been hostile to labor organization, as the paycheck protection legislation passed in the last session demonstrates. Utah unions have generally preferred to stay out of the public spotlight and negotiate rather than pursue direct action. The result has been a general lack of institutional support for the USC strikers.

Nor has the establishment press been very interested. Coverage in the *Deseret News* has been scant and business-biased. For example, after last month's rally in support of the USC workers, the *Deseret News* reported the event in their “Business” section. The article referred to the group repeatedly as “former employees” rather than strikers or, equally contentious, workers. The word choice is important because the strikers are still considered employees, employees on strike. The workers contend that owner Chris Utley fired them because they sought union representation—and this is illegal.

Nor has the *Tribune* been much more sympathetic. That paper did not clue into the importance of the strike until the National Labor Relations Board announced a decision against the company – well over two months after the strike began.

But while the mainstream media and some union leaders in Utah have failed to see the importance of this strike, coverage in the independent and Hispanic press has been more thorough, and members of labor's rank and file, such as organizers from PACE and members of the Retired Steelworkers' Union, have expressed both admiration and support for the USC strikers. Moreover, organizers from the carpenters' union have worked closely with community groups like Jobs With Justice, Food not Bombs, JEDI Women, the Utah Progressive Network, and the Citizen-Activist Network. Along with individual activists, the groups have organized a food pantry, provided lunches, and stood on the line in solidarity with the strikers. (It was through the Citizen-Activist Network and the Independent Media that we became involved with the strike.)

As is evident from the *Tribune*'s recent front-page article, the recent entry of state and federal agencies on the scene has finally brought more widespread public attention to the issue. The National Labor Relations Board, charged with investigating fair labor practices, ruled in early July that Utah Structural Coatings illegally fired the workers and ordered the company to reinstate the strikers with back pay. Thus far, the company has not

Democracy NO! Pacifica Crisis Continues; KRCL Fails to Respond

By Alan Naumann

As community listeners struggle to save Pacifica, KRCL General Manager Donna Land-Maldonado says the Pacifica crisis “has nothing to do with us.”

The oldest and most progressive listener-sponsored radio network in the country, Pacifica radio (www.pacifica.org), once again abandoned its founding principle of free speech when it took “Democracy Now,” off the air for three weeks in New York and Los Angeles during its recent fundraising drive. It was the first time



the program had been off-air during its five-year history.

Utrice Leid, general manager of Pacifica’s New York station, WBAI, claimed that “Democracy Now” host Amy Goodman had refused to raise money during the drive. Goodman denies the accusation and has filed a grievance with her union charging harassment and censorship.

“From the embattled studios of WBAI, from the studios of the banned and the fired, from the studios of our listeners, I’m Amy Goodman, thanks for listening to another edition of Democracy Now.”

Goodman’s co-host, Juan Gonzalez, who quit the show earlier this year, calling the current Pacifica management “corporate-style top-down management,” organized a listener boycott during the fund drive.

It was certainly the case that removing “Democracy Now” from the air contributed to Pacifica’s worst fund drive in recent years, during which it received only half its goal in the major New York market. Other Pacifica stations – KPFA in Berkeley, WPFW in Washington, D.C., KPFT in Houston, and KPFK in Los Angeles – all realized less than their fundraising goals.

The crisis at Pacifica is much deeper than fundraising. The attack on “Democracy Now” is just the latest in an ongoing struggle between local Pacifica stations and the national board.

In July 1999, Pacifica Radio management shut down Pacifica’s first station, KPFA, for 23 days, but the pressure of some 10,000 protesters forced management to re-open the station. Then, in December of 2000, Pacifica Radio management changed the locks at the WBAI station in New York City. During what has come to be known as the “Christmas Coup,” Pacifica fired and banned the station manager, the program director, and the union steward, as well as many long-time volunteers.

Since then, many more producers have been banned from the station, and protests have increased. Mimi Rosenberg, a twenty-year programmer for WBAI, was fired for violating a “gag order” and criticizing management on the air. According to Utrice Leid, Rosenberg was fired for “reprehensible conduct” in “excoriating WBAI and Pacifica.”

Originally, Pacifica’s board majority claimed that the continuing crisis was about production quality and expanding audience. But if the network wanted better ratings, why would management take their highest-rated show, “Democracy Now,” off the air?

Continued public pressure has led to the resignation of four Pacifica Board members, including the Board Chair, David Acosta, and Michael Palmer, who had advocated selling stations. Activists say the Pacifica Board is now more evenly split between current majority and dissidents (7-5), with the ruling clique at its weakest in years.

On Monday, July 16th, Goodman reported that attor-

neys for the current majority on the Pacifica Board of Directors requested an unprecedented emergency board meeting to elect five new members. The proposed new members include former Washington DC Mayor Marion Berry, Susan Estrich, the campaign manager for Michael Dukakis’ presidential run and a well-known TV commentator and Democratic Party activist, and comedian-activist Dick Gregory. Pacifica’s attorneys, in a letter to Alameda County Superior Court judge Ronald Sabraw in California (who is overseeing the three pending lawsuits against Pacifica) characterized the campaign to save Pacifica as being comprised of “self-appointed terrorists” and “fascist totalitarians.” The judge has refused the Board’s request.

By silencing “Democracy Now,” Pacifica has exposed the real motive behind the Christmas Coup: they want to silence the largest radio network airing progressive political opposition and giving voice to the marginalized members of society.

“Democracy Now” has consistently covered stories that the major media ignores or avoids: the situation in Iraq, where children are dying as a result of U.S. sanctions; CIA drug trafficking with the former President Bush’s blessing; and the possibility of charging Bill Clinton and Henry Kissinger with war crimes.

Goodman’s extensive coverage of a massacre of hundreds of villagers in East Timor has been credited with helping to change U.S. policy in Indonesia. The Indone-

sian military was equipped with U.S. weapons when it carried out the widespread massacres in November 1991.

Pacifica and “Democracy Now” are ever more crucial in a media landscape where 8 corporations control over 50% of America’s media outlets.

In the 80’s, Pacifica aired the Contra hearings gavel to gavel. Larry Bensky, who won a Polk award for his coverage, was summarily fired in ’99 by the current Pacifica Board majority for talking on his radio show about the issues surrounding the firing of one of KPFA’s most popular General Managers, Nicole Sawaya.

Sawaya had openly criticized Pacifica for taking increasingly higher percentages of each station’s fundraising without significant additional radio production (the “take” is now up to 17% from 3% in 1972; see www.savepacifica.net). The only significant addition to national programming has been “Democracy Now.”

The battle against censorship at Pacifica has moved from the streets to the courts. Three lawsuits have been filed against the Pacifica Foundation’s Board of Directors, the non-profit which holds the licenses for its five stations. Three current Pacifica Board members filed a lawsuit in 1999 charging that the Pacifica Board failed to follow the bylaws of the non-profit in allowing Board members to stay past their terms of office. The suit also alleges illegal denial of access to Pacifica Foundation financial records.

A second lawsuit brought by members of the Local Advisory Boards (LAB’s) of four of the five Pacifica stations charges unlawful disenfranchisement. The Board excluded LAB members from a board vote to change Pacifica’s by-laws.

Listeners have also filed a lawsuit. Over two thousand listeners charge the misuse of funds. The Pacifica Board spent an estimated \$500,000 for armed guards to shut down station KPFA in Berkely in the summer of 1999, and also hired expensive public relations firms and the law firm of Epstein, Becker and Green--a firm on the AFL-CIO’s list of union busters.

On May 15th the Progressive Caucus of the U.S. Congress held their own hearings into the Pacifica conflict at the request of New York Congressman Major Owens. Owens was yanked from the airwaves of WBAI in New York by the station’s manager, Utrice Leid while talking about the “Christmas Coup.” (You can listen to

the hearing online at www.savepacifica.net).

Despite these efforts, Pacifica is still very much at risk.

So far, KRCL, our local Pacifica affiliate, has resisted involvement in the crisis. KRCL General Manager Donna Land-Maldonado says the Pacifica crisis “has nothing to do with us.” In a meeting last October with thirteen listeners who asked to have a letter sent to the Pacifica Board expressing our concerns, we were told the avenue to voice KRCL’s concerns was through the National Association of Community Broadcasters. Maldonado said she would give the activists a copy of that letter but has yet to do so.

I went before KRCL’s Board of Directors two months ago and asked again to have a letter sent to the Pacifica Board of Directors. To date, no response. I asked for an on air discussion of these issues. No permission. I asked to air a half-hour piece by Pacifica Reporters Against Censorship that outlines the issues involved (see www.savepacifica.net/strike). No permission.

KRCL has been airing the half-hour Free Speech Newscast every Friday at 6 p.m. since January 2000. Produced by Pacifica Reporters Against Censorship, and hosted by former Pacifica Network News anchor Verna Avery Brown (who quit PNN a year and a half ago in response to problems at Pacifica), the program is now produced on a daily basis. KRCL, however, still only broadcasts Free Speech News on Fridays. One way that KRCL could make a stand in the Pacifica crisis would be to replace current Pacifica Network News programming with Free Speech News.

41 reporters in 14 states on 4 continents currently refuse to submit their work to the daily Pacifica Network News because of their censorship of legitimate news stories. KRCL’s public affairs director, Gena Edvalsan, however, has crossed the Pacifica picket line to file a story on white supremacist groups with PNN.

The global network of the Independent Media Center has thrown its support behind Free Speech News and the Pacifica strikers. The New York Independent Media Center is assisting Free Speech News in its daily production. The Washington D.C. IMC refused Pacifica Network News reporters access to their convergence center during the IMF and World Bank demonstrations of April, 2001.



Programs like Free Speech News and Live Wire Independent News have been developed because the needs of listeners are not being met by Pacifica Network News. KRCL, however, has shown little interest in engaging with the problem, refusing to air Live Wire or expand Free Speech News programming.

It’s time for KRCL to acknowledge the Pacifica Crisis and support Amy Goodman and more news on its airwaves.

“Democracy Now” airs on KRCL 90.9FM weekdays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Alan Naumann is a marble mason and a Pacifica Reporter Against Censorship. He’s filed four Utah stories for Free Speech News in the last year. Naumann is the Host of the progressive “Sunday Soundbites” radio show on KIQ 1010 AM at 4pm. You can email him at soundbites@firston.com.

Sierra Leone: The World’s Tragedy

By William Wager

For the past nine years, a bloody and demoralizing civil war has waged in Sierra Leone, a small, lush country on Africa’s west coast. The conflict, largely ignored by the international press, has been characterized by horrific brutality. Sierra Leoneans of all ages have suffered profoundly. While each side in the civil war has been responsible for human rights abuses, the worst atrocities have been and continue to be practiced by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) Rebel Forces. RUF routinely severs limbs from men, women and children. Rape and torture are used against women throughout Sierra Leone, even against prepubescent girls. Children are recruited as soldiers, through threats, false promises and force.

As recently as May, 2001, RUF was forcing children into its ranks, “...placing them on the front lines of combat,” said Peter Takirambudde, executive director of the Africa Division of Human Rights Watch. “For child soldiers, the crisis in Sierra Leone is far from over.”

The extreme abuses in Sierra Leone galvanized the international community to bring about a negotiated solution to the civil war. The U.N., ECOWAS, and OAU, facilitated the Lomé peace agreement. Unofficially, the agreement was supported by the British, American, and Nigerian governments. But the Lomé peace agreement has been violated and the suffering continues. Sierra Leone’s human rights emergency may have been averted if the world had paid attention sooner. In the discussion below, Sierra Leonean journalist William Wager addresses the failure of the international press to expose the tragedy in Sierra Leone.

In December of 2000, William Wager and his son, Bernard, settled in Salt Lake City after escaping the brutal war zone of Sierra Leone. A world-class journalist, Mr. Wager has worked extensively in film, television, radio and print media. He is a founding member of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists and the first African executive member elected to the Institute of Journalists in London. Mr. Wager has reported for the BBC and Channel Africa, and anchored a talk show, “Facing the Nation.” Most recently, Mr. Wager was the research manager for the documentary, “Nightmare in Paradise,” an expose of the corruption in Sierra Leone that aired on PBS.

The following is an excerpt from his panel talk at the recent Utah IMC fundraiser. After the screening of “This Is What Democracy Looks Like,” Mr. Wager addressed the state of free press in Sierra Leone.

The war dealt a severe blow to the press in Sierra Leone. Some journalists took sides. A particular newspaper became the official organ of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) Rebel Forces, the group that had committed the most heinous and barbaric crimes against the people of Sierra Leone.

The editor of this newspaper was financed by the then RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, who (according to an article published in the Committee for the Protection of Journalists Quarterly Magazine in New York) was described as the Number One Enemy of the Press. Foday Sankoh was ranked alongside such heads of state as Slobodan Milosevic and the Chinese Premier.

One of the most critical and objective newspapers of the independent media has become sympathetic to the government in Sierra Leone.

We also have witnessed a majority of journalists compromising their independence for want of funds to survive. These newspapers are heavily dependent on businessmen viz a viz politicians. It is widely alleged that these sponsors have interfered with the editorial judgement of these newspapers, thereby leaving us with the old English adage that “he who pays the piper calls the tune.”

Most of the newspapers, though not all, have failed the people dismally. Instead of educating the people of their rights and good governance, they’ve resorted to bread and butter journalism, or gutter journalism. Sierra Leone has a high rate of illiteracy, but the country has over forty newspapers. With such a proliferation of newspapers in a country with a population of less than four million, one is tempted to ask, is Sierra Leone a safe haven for journalists? According to the CPJ report for the year 1999, out of the 34 journalists killed worldwide, 10 were from Sierra Leone.

One of them died in prison. Another was allegedly gunned down by ECOMOG (Intervention Force) soldiers. The remaining eight were targeted by the RUF Rebels.

A number of journalists, including myself, were on the RUF’s elimination list. However, with God’s help, we were able to pull out from the country before they could reach us. This was in May, 1997, when the Capital of Freetown was under siege by the Rebels.



© Corinne Dufka/Human Rights Watch

They were going to kill me because I had presented a series of shows both on radio and television criticizing and denouncing their barbaric acts. To underscore the extreme situation in Sierra Leone, four foreign journalists were ambushed by RUF rebels during a May incident last year. Two were killed and the others escaped with injuries.

Reuters Veteran war correspondent Kurt Schork and Associated Press Minguel Gil de Mora were victims of bullets from the RUF rebels. So too was another local journalist, reportedly gunned down by Foday’s Sankoh’s body-guard. May their souls rest in peace.

It is sad to note how little media coverage the war in Sierra Leone has received internationally. Had this war been exposed worldwide, we would not have seen Sierra Leone degenerate as it did. The rebels would not have committed all the atrocities they are known for: amputating hands and limbs of defenseless civilians, raping women and children, and burning homes among them. After several years of independence by some African states, there’s little evidence of progress. Sierra Leone is an example. After forty years of independence from Britain, corrupt politicians, civil servants and businessmen have wrecked the country. They’ve dismantled the structures inherited from their colonial masters, such as good governance, transparency and accountability.

Though Sierra Leone has rich mineral deposits--diamonds, iron ore, rutile, and gold--the majority of people cannot afford a day’s meal. The wealth is in the hands of the corrupt businessmen, politicians and civil servants. In order to get out of this malaise, the press must accept its pivotal role in nation-building. The press must remain independent, check the excesses committed by people in authority, teach the people their rights to life, teach the importance of democracy and how it works, educate the populace about the prevailing politics and economy of the country, and show itself to be vibrant at all times.

If these steps had been followed, maybe I, and my son, and the millions of refugees scattered all over the world would not have been made refugees. Finally, as members of the Fourth Estate of the Realm, in discharging our duties, let us remind our rulers of this Latin saying, “Diregenos Inveritate: Lead us in Truth.”

Call to Action: FTAA and Fast Track

by Heather Hirschi

FTAA, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, extends the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, to the entire western hemisphere, excluding Cuba. That’s 34 countries. FTAA would eliminate all barriers to trade from northernmost Canada to the tip of Argentina. It would allow corporations to sue governments for laws that impede trade, laws that enforce environmental, consumer, and labor standards. Under NAFTA, the U.S. has lost nearly 800,000 jobs from 1994 to 2000. NAFTA has done more to *erode* than to protect workers’ rights and environmental standards. And the FTAA would increase NAFTA’s grasp.

And if FTAA sounds scary, its Fast Track vehicle for passage, the Trade Promotion Authority Act of 2001 is just as frightening. Introduced by Republican representative Phil Crane, HR 2149 would strip Congress of its constitutional right to amend or change the terms of international trade agreements, giving primary negotiating authority to George W. Bush. Each member of Congress would get 20 hours to debate trade agreements that can run to thousands of pages. Further, Congress would have only 60 days to act, creating a pressure cooker where big business can use its money and influence to maximum effect before a broad-based democratic debate can catch up. HR 2149 outlines specific protections for corporate profits, but in 52 pages makes no mention of workers’ rights or environmental impact except to exclude these protections from Fast Track agreements. Moreover, Crane and cronies are pushing for a vote before the August 4th congressional recess.

**Why is everyone so quiet?
Is this the democracy you wanted?**

--Subcomandante Marcos

We cannot afford to sacrifice constitutional rights to corporate greed. We cannot afford to export good jobs, or to decimate cultures and ecosystems in the interest of Big Profit. And we cannot forgo a democratic, broad-based process that takes the time to include all interests nationwide.

Make a big noise for balanced trade. Call your congressional representatives toll free at 1-800-393-1082, or contact their offices:

Orrin Hatch - US Senate 104 Hart Bldg. Washington, DC 20510 senator-hatch@hatch.senate.gov 801.524.4380 (SLC) 801.375.7881 (Provo)	Chris Cannon - US House of Representatives (co-sponsor of HR 2149) 118 Cannon House Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20515 cannon@ut03.mail.house.gov 801.379.2500 (SLC) 202.225.7751 (DC)
Robert Bennett - US Senate 431 Dirksen Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510 senator@bennett.senate.gov 801.524.5933 (SLC) 202.224.5444 (DC) 202.228.1168 (Fax)	James Hansen - US House of Representatives 242 Cannon House Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20515 801.625.5677 (SLC) 202.225.0453 (DC)
	Jim Matheson - US House of Representatives 410 Cannon House Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20515 202.225.3011 (DC) 202.225.5638 (Fax)